

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT**

**Coláiste Iascaigh
Easkey, County Sligo
Roll number: 72320A**

Date of inspection: 20 March 2013



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HOME ECONOMICS**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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| Dates of inspection | 20 March 2013 |
| Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teacher• Interaction with students | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teacher |

MAIN FINDINGS

- High quality teaching and learning was evident in all of the lessons observed.
- A very good range of resources was used effectively to enhance teaching and learning.
- There was evidence of some good use of differentiated teaching and active learning strategies.
- There was very good teacher-student rapport during all of the lessons observed.
- Practices and procedures in relation to homework and assessment in Home Economics are good.
- There is very good resource provision and whole school support for Home Economics.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Active and collaborative learning methodologies should be more widely used to support learning.
 - Existing arrangements for subject options should be kept under review.
 - The outcomes for current and future self-evaluation activities should inform the identification of priorities and related action planning.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Iascaigh is a small co-educational school operating under the trusteeship of County Sligo Vocational Education Committee. The school is the sole provider of post-primary education in the locality and serves a largely rural population. The mainstream enrolment currently stands at 137. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative. Transition Year (TY) is currently not offered at the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- High standards of advance planning and preparation resulted in very good quality teaching and learning. Clear learning outcomes were communicated to the students at the beginning of the lessons and assessed at the end. Lessons were clearly focused, well sequenced and presented at a pace that accommodated the individual abilities of the students.
- The use of a range of relevant visual and tactile stimuli and resources to enhance teaching and consolidate learning is commended. Information and communication technology (ICT) was used in planning as well as a teaching and learning tool very effectively. Students are also encouraged to make very good use of ICT.
- A good range of methodologies including differentiation strategies was incorporated into lessons, however there is scope to extend the use of active learning strategies such as pair work, group work, peer presentations and especially peer teaching and peer evaluation to support students' learning.
- Well-organised practical work was observed and at appropriate intervals throughout, clear instruction was provided in relation to the steps of the task, importance of hygiene and safety, resource management, nutritional value of food, sensory evaluation, and the relevant underlying principles of cookery.
- Very good questioning and explaining strategies were integrated effectively to engage students in the learning activity, to check understanding and to support students in the development of higher-order thinking skills.
- All of the lessons observed were conducted in a supportive and affirming environment and mutual respect between all was evident in classroom interactions.
- Students were fully engaged in the learning activities and demonstrated very good understanding of subject knowledge and various skills in practical work appropriate to their ability. This was borne out by the quality of their written work, project work and the quality of their responses to teacher questioning.
- Observation of students' project work indicated a high level of competence in terms of task investigation, organisation and presentation.
- To support students in integrating relevant theory with practical skills the design brief process should be introduced as early as possible in the junior cycle in both food studies and the practical textiles work.
- The school operates a system of continuous assessment, culminating in end-of-term reports. This practice of continuous assessment assists in evaluating individual student progress and is central to promoting the highest levels of student achievement. There is greater scope for the various components of the subject to be reflected in this process.

- Practices and procedures in relation to homework and assessment in Home Economics are commendable and in line with the school's homework and assessment policies. Good use is made of assessment for learning strategies. The implementation of revision plans with accompanying sets of revision questions would further support examination classes.
- Students' progress and competence is monitored and assessed effectively by a range of assessment modes. There is scope to provide students with more detailed formative feedback to enable them to improve the quality of their work.
- Good attention was paid to promoting the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Home Economics is a very popular optional subject in all year groups, albeit traditionally a subject chosen predominately by the female cohort. Uptake significantly exceeds the national norms. The Hotel, Catering and Tourism vocational specialism is provided for Leaving Certificate Applied students when there is sufficient demand.
- A short taster programme in optional subjects is undertaken by incoming first-year students. The curricular content of the home economics taster programme should be reviewed in order to reflect all aspects of Home Economics.
- Subject option bands at junior and senior cycle are based on students' preferences, however, subject choices tend to remain traditional. The school has a role to play in supporting students to make less traditional subject choices, in order to encourage gender balance. Arrangements for optional subject choices should continue to be monitored and reviewed over time in consultation with the partners involved.
- Home Economics benefits from a very good level of resource provision and whole-school support. The school has a recently refurbished specialist room, which functions as a kitchen and a textiles room. The facility is very well maintained and resourced. Management is committed to the ongoing updating of resources and servicing of equipment for both food and textiles studies.
- There is very good engagement with continuing professional development.
- The school should develop procedures for regular review of its health and safety statement in line with current guidelines and legislation.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Very good progress has been made in developing a comprehensive subject plan, which includes details on the procedures for the organisation of the subject, as well as issues of a direct pedagogical nature such as planning, teaching and learning, and assessment. In addition, detailed schemes of work, including learning outcomes, methodologies, resources and assessment procedures have been drawn up for each year group. In the context of self-evaluation a review section should also be included so that the schemes of work could be utilised as working documents.
- Individual lesson planning was very good and it is positive that records of work completed are maintained.

- There were some good examples of ongoing self-evaluation evident, such as the analysis of student achievement in certificate examinations and progressive subject planning. Once developmental priorities have been identified for Home Economics, action plans, including timeframes for their implementation, should then be developed to achieve these priorities. Success criteria should be designed to appraise progress.
- Students and their parents are advised regularly on their progress in the subject.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teacher at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board welcomes the findings of the recent subject inspection in Home Economics at Coláiste Iascaigh. They are pleased with the high quality of teaching and learning. The report affirms the good practice that exists in the subject area and the school in general.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

Work on addressing the recommendations has begun and will continue to form part of the schools planning process in all subjects into the future.